



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Proposition 40 Bond Funds

### **Gov. Davis Proposes \$10 Million For New Statewide Indian Museum**

SACRAMENTO – Governor Gray Davis has proposed that \$10 million from this year's Proposition 40 be set aside for the future design and initial construction of a new California Indian Museum. The proposal was part of the Governor's May revision of his proposed 2002-03 state budget presented to the Legislature on Tuesday.

The museum, to be developed in close collaboration with Native American representatives throughout California, would be under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and would focus on California's Indian history and culture through interpretive facilities, exhibits and programs. The museum, a site for which has not yet been chosen, would provide a venue for making thousands of Native American artifacts currently in the Department's collections accessible to the public.

Ruth Coleman, Acting Director of the California Department of Parks and Recreation, said the announcement comes at an important time.

"Representatives from my Department have been meeting with tribal groups and visiting tribal museums throughout the state to gather input on how a new museum can best serve native communities," she said today. "We are anxious to continue moving forward on this project."

Cindy La Marr, Executive Director of Capitol Area Indian Resources, Inc., a program

For energy efficient recreation -



California State Parks

on the Internet: <<http://www.parks.ca.gov>>

designed to encourage the development of all aspects of education for the American Indian community while affirming and preserving Native cultural and traditional values, today praised the Governor's action on the new museum.

"It will recognize the untold contributions that were made to our state's history and finally formally acknowledge its original inhabitants with the respect that is deserved," said La Marr, who is from the Pit River and Paiute Tribes of California and has lived in the Sacramento area for more than 20 years.

"California's American Indian population was devastated by genocide, disease and unjustifiable destruction during the 1800s and early 1900s," she said. "History has never reflected the true account of California's indigenous population. It is now time we take a proper place of honor and rightful ownership of our culture, traditions and contributions to California's history."

Larry Myers, Executive Secretary of the Native American Heritage Commission, said, "The citizens of California want and deserve a first-rate facility that will honor and respect its Native American citizens of the past, today and the future. My vision is that this will become a great facility and will be known as the Smithsonian of the West."

It is anticipated that the \$10 million in bond funds would be used to pay for the planning, design and construction of the initial phase of the museum. Proposition 40, providing \$2.6 billion in funds for parks and water quality projects, was approved by California voters in March.

Museum supporters are seeking to establish a task force at the California Department of Parks and Recreation that would provide direction to the Department in its efforts to establish the museum. The task force would include members appointed by the Native American Heritage Commission and members representing different California Indian tribes. Such a task force would be essential in ensuring that development of the museum is representative of the California Native American experience.

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# A new push under way for Indian culture center

Voter-approved funds may finally make the facility a reality, possibly in Sacramento.

By Roger Phelps  
BEE STAFF WRITER

California's American Indians have waited decades for a chance to educate people in the ways of the state's indigenous cultures.

Now, a push by Sacramento's Capitol Area Indian Resources group, combined with a proposal by Gov. Gray Davis to commit \$10 million in state bond money, has given life to the project.

Proposition 40 park bond funds – approved by voters this year – are proposed to help design and construct a long-awaited California Indian Cultural Center and Museum, said Cindy La Marr, the group's executive director.

The cultural center could wind up in the Sacramento area. However, no location is set.

La Marr, a Pit River and Paiute tribeswoman who is a leading proponent of the project, said she would work to put the cultural facility in the Sacramento area.

The state Department of Parks and Recreation, which will administer the project, has talked for the past 40 years about establishing a statewide Indian cultural center, said La Marr and Steve Capps, spokesman for the parks department.

"I've seen elders get excited, and then discouraged, by this project," La Marr said. "It has been named as a priority by the parks department, but it has taken second place, or less."

Davis called this month for spending \$10 million on the facility during his revision of the governor's proposed budget for fiscal 2002-03.

The center is important to the state, La Marr said, because American Indian culture has lessons to teach Indians and non-Indians alike in "the life ways – our traditions."

The center should have facilities to help people improve knowledge of tribal languages because those languages are being lost, La Marr said.

The current push for a statewide Indian center is different from previous efforts in that design and other conceptual work for the center could be done largely by American Indians on a special task force, said David Quintana, legislative director for state Sen. Jim Brulte, R-Rancho Cucamonga.

Brulte wrote Senate Bill 2063, which would authorize setting up the task force.

"Our bill specifies that one-half of the task force must be California Indians, as opposed to park department bureaucrats," Quintana said.

SB 2063 has bipartisan support and almost certainly will pass the Legislature, Quintana said.



Gov. Gray Davis, discussing his revised 2002-03 state budget Tuesday, has called for spending \$10 million in park funds on the Indian cultural facility.

Associated Press/Rich Pedroncelli

No firm plans exist for specific features in the facility, but task force members are expected to discuss ideas such as a space in which to take a walk through Indian history in the state, La Marr said.

Other elements the center could contain include ceremonial grounds, replicated dwellings, a theater and an art gallery, La Marr said.

A museum element is important for the cultural center, Quintana and Capps said, partly because the parks department holds many crates of Indian cultural artifacts from around the state in a West Sacramento warehouse. The warehouse can be toured by appointment only.

"It's boxes and boxes and shelves and shelves," Quintana said. "It's like the final scene from 'Raiders of the Lost Ark.'"

The planned facility will mark a change in the status of native Californian tribal culture as a base of the state's modern-day culture, La Marr said. California is home to more than 150 distinct tribes, of which 109 are recognized by the federal government as sovereign nations.

Killings by miners and settlers decimated the state's Indian population from about 350,000 before the Gold Rush to about 7,000, La Marr said. As of the 2000 census, 333,346 American Indians lived in California.

"The 2000 census says California has the highest population of Indians in the country," La Marr said. "We want to make sure the facility is inclusive of all California tribes and portrays the real history of what happened to our people."

La Marr said several private collections of Indian basketry have been offered to the facility.

The planned California Indian Cultural Center and Museum is at least a five-year project, La Marr said.

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